

Mark 9:2-9

There is one particular day in the life of our Lord in which He climbed up a mountain and showed His glory. On this day and from that mountain, His glory could be seen most clearly. There was no mistaking the fact that this was God Himself. That day was Good Friday, and that mountain was Mt. Calvary. And I begin this sermon for Transfiguration Sunday in this manner because we dare not look at Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration without keeping Mt Calvary and the cross before us.

We would like to think that if we had been there with Peter, James, and John on that high mountain when Jesus was transfigured; if we had seen Jesus shine like the sun; if we had heard the voice of the Father coming from the cloud, then we would be totally convinced that Jesus really is the Son of God. For then we, like His three disciples, would be privileged to have a glimpse of His Divine glory. And yet, nowhere is God's glory more clearly seen than when He suffers and dies for sinful mankind. "The word of the cross," writes St. Paul, "is the power of God." (1 Cor.1:18) The simple things...the "foolish things," as Paul puts it, are where God reveals His glory to sinners. Things which the world despises. Things which most take for granted—the water and Word at the baptismal font, the bread and wine of Communion, the preached Word, the Word of forgiveness proclaimed here week after week. Here in these things we see God's glory...we see the cross—that He would stoop down and take the form of a Suffering Servant and die for those who hate Him, and give His rich eternal gifts to poor, miserable sinners like us through simple, humble means.

God's glory is revealed not so much in the fact that He created this vast universe, but in the fact that when sin entered our world, He Himself died for those He created. God's glory is revealed not so much in the fact that He was transfigured on a high mountain, but in the fact that He came back down that mountain and set His face to journey to another mountain where He would meet the cross for us.

And it's a good thing He did, because you and I cannot handle His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration without His death for us before our eyes. His three disciples could not handle His majestic glory. They were terrified when He changed His appearance on that high mountain. They acted like three deer on the highway blinded by the bright lights of an oncoming car. They froze in their tracks. They could not think right or act normal. Peter spoke words of nonsense: "Shall we put up three tents?" But he did not know what to say, they were so afraid.

Peter speaks for us all. Our minds have been made dull because we keep turning away from the cross and become blinded by the light of God's glory—the light of His Law which reveals how utterly wicked we are. We, like Peter, speak out of fear, words which make no sense. Words like: "If I do more for God, then He will accept me." "If I change my sinful ways, then God will forgive me." "I hope I make it to heaven one day, but I'm not sure if I'm good enough." These words are utter nonsense! They enter our minds and escape from our lips because we look at God and who He is apart from the cross of Jesus Christ.

But God will not listen to such utter nonsense. His voice boomed from the cloud telling Peter that he should shut his mouth. "Be quiet Peter and listen to Jesus!" "Be still and know that I am God." (Ps.46:10) Do not listen to your own foolish words, but only to what

Jesus has to say. And that word, “listen,” is for us as well. “Listen...and keep on listening to Jesus.”

What does Jesus say? “Take eat...Take drink...This is My body and My blood...given and shed for you for the remission of sins.” “I Myself am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.” “I Myself am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me shall live even though he dies.” Listen to Jesus through the words He puts into the mouth of His called servant to speak in His stead: “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” “I forgive you all your sins in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Go in peace.”

Do not listen to your heart. “Out of the heart,” Jesus tells us, “proceed evil thoughts...” (Matt.15:19) If you listen to your heart, you are not listening to Jesus. Your heart will cause you to doubt God’s sure Word. You will not find the Word of the cross of Jesus within your heart. You will find greed and covetousness there, lust and adulteries, hatred and murder. Judas listened to his heart and he betrayed his Lord. David listened to his heart and he sinned with Bathsheba. Eve listened to her heart and she believed the lying serpent. “Listen to Jesus!” The Father’s voice is clear. You will never be certain that you are God’s child if you listen to your heart. You will always doubt whether your sins are truly forgiven if you listen to your heart. You will be plagued upon your deathbed, uncertain of your eternal future, if you listen to your heart. Friend, listen to Jesus. Jesus speaks words of eternal life. Jesus is the Word of the cross. He is the Voice of the Father. He is Forgiveness, and Life, and Salvation.

“Listen to Jesus,” says your Heavenly Father. He did not say, “think of Jesus.” He said, “Listen to Him.” Not that we shouldn’t think of Jesus, but our thoughts about Jesus can never replace His living Words to us. You are not saved from your sins by thinking of your Savior, but by listening to Him. For His powerful Word, as it reaches your ears, does what it declares—it forgives you, it saves you, it makes you who you are: God’s children in Christ through water and Word, children of promise, children of hope. If you think you can substitute thinking about Jesus on your tractor, or in your bed, or at your jobsite, for actually listening to His preached Word of Life, then you need to hear again the Father’s voice: “Listen to Him! Listen to Jesus!”

He did not say, “Look at Jesus,” He said “Listen to Him.” In fact, the disciples could not look at Jesus. His appearance was too brilliant for them to handle. Neither can we. We cannot look at Jesus for He covers Himself with simple, ordinary, humble things—things the world despises, things that most take for granted. We cannot see Jesus in the water and Word at the baptismal font, but we do hear His words there for us—“Baptized into Christ, we die and rise with Him.” (Rom.6) We cannot see Jesus in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, but we do hear His words there for us—“Depart in peace...for this is My body and blood, given and shed for you.” You and I cannot see Jesus here in His House, but we hear His living voice here—the words which free you from the power of your sins; words which give you eternal life. The Father would not have us look at Jesus, but He does want you to listen to Him.

Friend, are you? Are you listening to Jesus? The truth is that not one of us listens very well. And that’s why our Savior did not stay up on the Mount of Transfiguration even though Peter wanted Him to. But Jesus knew that not one of us could see the glory of

heaven unless He first went to the cross to suffer for us the agony of hell. And so He did. He died for you. He accomplished your salvation. He did everything that had to be done in order for you to live in heaven forever. And here, where His Word is proclaimed, where God opens your ears to listen...here Christ is giving you everything that He did for you.

The Transfiguration Mountain...it must have been something for Peter, James, and John to see. And we'll see that one day. We'll see God's brilliant glory in heaven's majestic halls—all because Jesus came back down from that mountain to go to the cross for you. And that's why...that's why, friend, we listen to Him. Amen.